



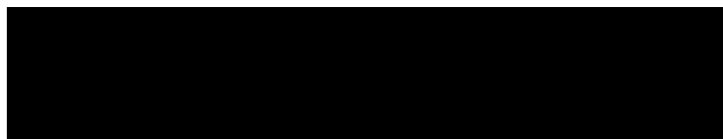
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[REDACTED]

Mexico: Defense Secretary's Visit to the USSR [REDACTED]

Defense Secretary Felix Galvan's trip to Moscow in late September was timed to remind Washington of Mexico's independent position in international affairs.

The Mexican press has reported Galvan's vague statements in Moscow concerning a possible military training agreement.

[REDACTED]

The Mexicans have been cautious not to overplay the Galvan mission or to give the impression that it had any hidden meaning. Galvan, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] emphasized that his visit was strictly confined to developing contacts between the two armed forces. [REDACTED]

Given the small Mexican military establishment and its restricted political role, an agreement--if one exists--probably would be limited to cooperation in training a small number of officers at Soviet military academies. Any dramatic change on Mexico's part to upgrade ties with the Soviets would rest with President Lopez Portillo. [REDACTED]

Mexican military leadership has played down contacts with the USSR in the past. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] A low-level armed forces delegation traveled to Moscow in August 1977, but its purpose was primarily ceremonial. [REDACTED]

5 October 1979

SECRET

Galvan is a staunch anti-Communist, although he probably has no aversion to investigating what sort of cooperation the Soviets might propose. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The ruling party has traditionally satisfied military appetites by awarding political posts to senior officers rather than by approving extensive weapons acquisitions. [REDACTED]

Galvan's trip and the press coverage probably are part of Lopez Portillo's left-right balancing act for his domestic audience and a gambit to improve his bargaining stance [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] At the same time, Galvan's trip enables the President to assuage leftist criticism [REDACTED]

Like the rest of Mexican officialdom, Defense Secretary Galvan has an apparently genuine conviction about maintaining an independent attitude in relations with all countries--a hallmark of Mexican foreign policy. Mexico, therefore, might consider some small-scale cooperation with the USSR [REDACTED]

5 October 1979

~~SECRET~~

Moreover, despite some sentiment within military circles favoring armed forces modernization, Mexico's civilian political leadership is wary of creating a well-trained and well-equipped force that could become a source of political intervention.

Mexico's transition to major oil producer could portend a longer term change in the traditional civil-military relationship. The ruling party will likely resist pressure for an armed forces buildup; it will also keep political power diffused in order to forestall an armed forces counterbalance to civilian power.

5 October 1979

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